<h2 style="text-align:center">Amendments to the Claims</h2>

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method comprising:
- receiving session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information as corresponds to an authentication message as sourced by a given subscriber;
- converting the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information into corresponding RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information;
- using the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein receiving session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information comprises using a session initiation protocol compatible proxy to receive the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein converting the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information comprises using an authentication mediation server to convert the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein using an authentication mediation server comprises using a physically discrete authentication mediation server.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein using an authentication mediation server comprises using a virtual authentication mediation server.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein using the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber comprises using a RADIUS server to use the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein using the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber comprises using the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber with respect to usage of a particular communication service by the given subscriber.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein using the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber with respect to usage of a particular communication service by the given subscriber comprises facilitating authentication of the given subscriber with respect to usage of a particular communication service comprising a near-real-time multicast communication service.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the near-real-time multicast communication service comprises a one-to-many communication service.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein the one-to-many communication service comprises a voice communication service.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the voice communication service comprises a voice-over-Internet-Protocol communication service.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1 and further comprising:
- generating billing information that pertains to a communication service as is provided to the given subscriber;
- providing the billing information to a RADIUS compatible server.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein generating billing information that pertains to a communication service as is provided to the given subscriber comprises generating billing information that pertains to a near-real-time multicast communication service as is provided to the given subscriber.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein generating billing information that pertains to a near-real-time multicast communication service as is provided to the given subscriber comprises generating billing information that corresponds, at least in part, to at least one of:
- a start time for a near-real-time multicast communication service;
- an end time for a near-real-time multicast communication service;
- an Internet Protocol address of a near-real-time multicast communication service server;
- an Internet Protocol address of a session initiation protocol compatible proxy;
- identifying information for an initiating party of a near-real-time multicast communication; and
- identifying information for a plurality of participants of a near-real-time multicast communication.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein generating billing information that pertains to a near-real-time multicast communication service as is provided to the given subscriber comprises generating billing information for a portion of a near-real-time multicast session that comprises at least one of:

- identifying information for a particular participant of the near-real-time multicast session;

- a start time for the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- an end time for the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- a measure of data as was communicated during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- an amount of transmission time as occurred during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- an amount of reception time as occurred during the near-real-time multicast session;

- identifying information regarding a voice codec;

- total session initiation protocol bytes as were transmitted during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session; and

- total session initiation protocol bytes as were received during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session.

16. (Currently amended) A method comprising, in conjunction with conducting a near-real-time multicast session using an Internet Protocol compatible communication service:

- generating billing information that pertains to the near-real-time multicast session as regards at least one given participating subscriber;

- providing the billing information to a RADIUS compatible server;

- receiving session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information as corresponds to an authentication message as sourced by a given subscriber in conjunction with the near-real-time multicast session;

- converting the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information into corresponding RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information;

- using the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber to participate in the near-real-time multicast session.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein generating billing information comprises generating billing information that corresponds, at least in part, to at least one of:

- a start time for the near-real-time multicast session;

- an end time for the near-real-time multicast session;

- an Internet Protocol address of a near-real-time multicast communication service server;

- an Internet Protocol address of a session initiation protocol compatible proxy;

- identifying information for an initiating party of the near-real-time multicast session; and

- identifying information for a plurality of participants of the near-real-time multicast session.

18. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein generating billing information comprises generating billing information for a portion of the near-real-time multicast session that comprises at least one of:

- identifying information for a particular participant of the near-real-time multicast session;

- a start time for the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- an end time for the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- a measure of data as was communicated during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- an amount of transmission time as occurred during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session;

- an amount of reception time as occurred during the near-real-time multicast session;

- identifying information regarding a voice codec;

- total session initiation protocol bytes as were transmitted during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session; and

- total session initiation protocol bytes as were received during the portion of the near-real-time multicast session.

19. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein generating billing information that pertains to the near-real-time multicast session as regards at least one given participating subscriber comprises generating billing information that pertains to the near-real-time multicast session as regards a plurality of participating subscribers.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein providing the billing information to a RADIUS compatible server comprises:

- segregating the billing information as pertains to each participating subscriber to provide segregated billing information;

- providing the segregated billing information to the RADIUS compatible server.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 wherein providing the segregated billing information to the RADIUS compatible server further comprises providing temporally parsed segregated billing information to the RADIUS compatible server.

22. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein:

- generating billing information that pertains to the near-real-time multicast session as regards at least one given participating subscriber comprises receiving, by a billing mediation server, at least some services usage information from a near-real-time multicast session server; and

- providing the billing information to a RADIUS compatible server comprises the billing mediation server providing the billing information to the RADIUS compatible server.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently amended) The method of claim 16 ~~23~~ wherein receiving session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information comprises using a session initiation protocol compatible proxy to receive the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information.

25. (Currently amended) The method of claim 16 ~~23~~ wherein converting the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message information comprises using an authentication mediation server to convert the session initiation protocol compatible authentication message.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25 wherein using an authentication mediation server comprises using a billing mediation server as an authentication mediation server.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26 wherein using a billing mediation server comprises using a physically discrete billing mediation server.

28. (Original) The method of claim 26 wherein using a billing mediation server comprises using a virtual billing mediation server.

29. (Currently amended) The method of claim 16 ~~23~~ wherein using the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber to participate in the near-real-time multicast session comprises using a RADIUS server to use the RADIUS protocol compatible authentication message information to facilitate authentication of the given subscriber to participate in the near-real-time multicast session.

30. (Currently amended) An authentication and billing mediation server comprising:

- a session initiation protocol compatible interface to facilitate authentication communications regarding near-real-time multicast communication services;

- a near-real-time multicast communications services server interface to facilitate receiving billing information from a near-real-time multicast communications services server regarding a multi-participant near-real-time multicast session;

- a RADIUS server interface to facilitate providing information to a RADIUS server regarding:

    - authentication communications; and

    - the billing information, wherein the billing information comprises at least one of:

        - a start time for a near-real-time multicast communication service;

        - an end time for a near-real-time multicast communication service;

        - an Internet Protocol address of a near-real-time multicast communication service server;

        - an Internet Protocol address of a session initiation protocol compatible proxy;

        - identifying information for an initiating party of a near-real-time multicast communication; and

        - identifying information for a plurality of participants of a near-real-time multicast communication.

31. (Original) The authentication and billing mediation server of claim 30 wherein the session initiation protocol compatible interface comprises a 3Q compatible interface.

32. (Original) The authentication and billing mediation server of claim 30 wherein the session initiation protocol compatible interface operably couples to a session initiation protocol proxy.

33. (Cancelled)

34. (Original) The authentication and billing mediation server of claim 30 and further comprising billing means for processing the billing information to provide temporally parsed billing information as corresponds to portions of a given near-real-time multicast session.

35. (Original) The authentication and billing mediation server of claim 30 and further comprising billing means for processing the billing information to provide parsed billing information as individually corresponds to individual participants of a given near-real-time multicast session.

36. (Original) The authentication and billing mediation server of claim 35 wherein the billing means further processes the billing information to provide temporally parsed billing information as corresponds to portions of a given near-real-time multicast session.